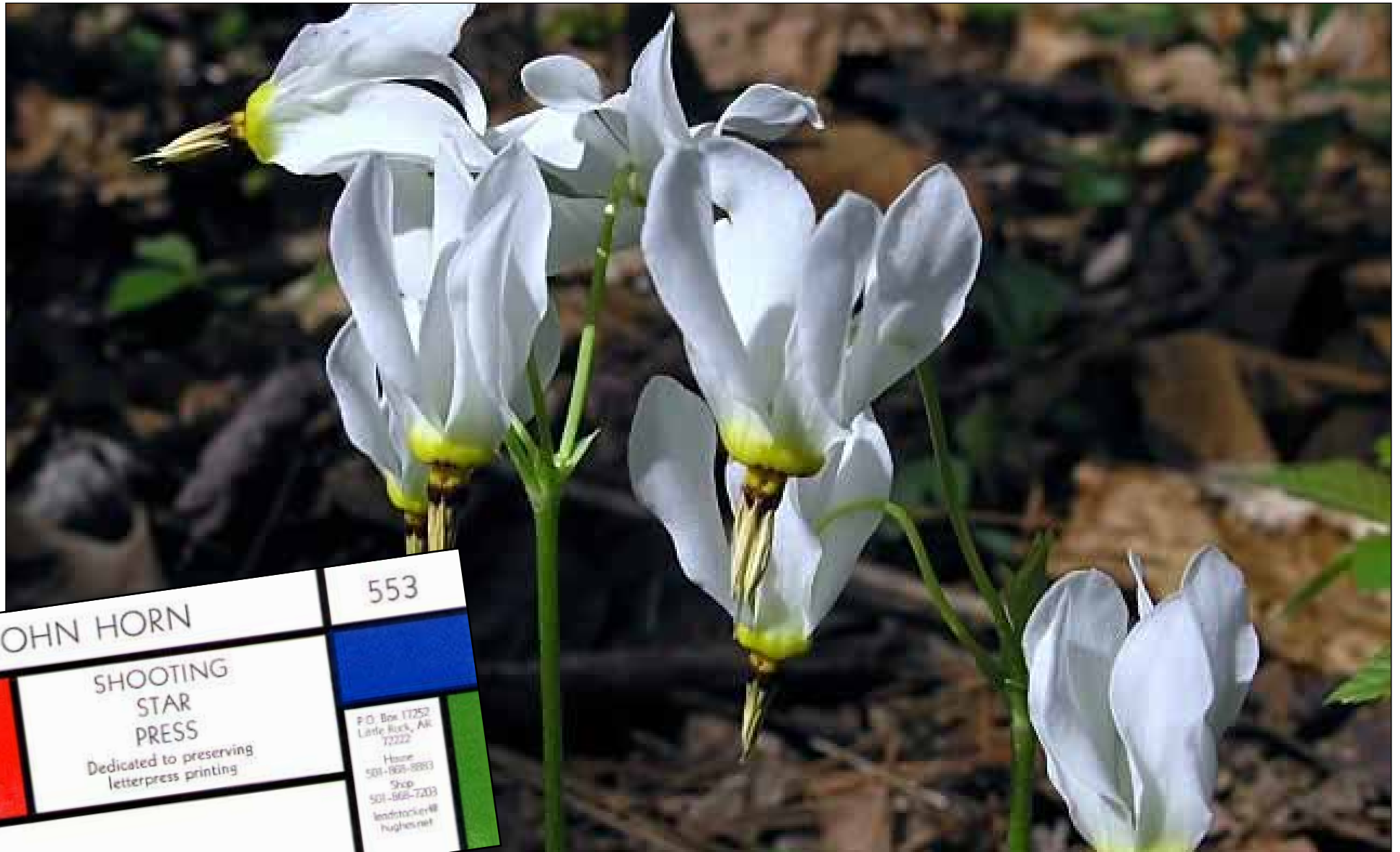




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APA JOURNAL

APA JOURNAL is the unofficial publication of the [Amalgamated Printers' Association](#). The editor is Mike O'Connor. Any and all comments welcomed. The publication is published as the spirit moves the editor but a monthly schedule is hoped for. [Contact the editor](#).



SHOOTING STAR FLOWERS

Says the man with 3,000 fonts:

'You can never have enough type!'

but about a quarter of it is enclosed in a wood-framed area. This area is divided into John's print shop and also a studio for his wife, Robyn where she plies her talents in

painting and sculpture. The print shop has a space of about 50'x55'. John confesses that the shop is "spreading" outside his shop into the warehouse area and beyond.

To say it is well equipped would be an understatement of the century. John has a weakness for presses and has about 200 of them in his shop/warehouse. While John "likes" presses, he "loves" type. He possesses over 2,600 fonts of metal type and 400 fonts of wood type. "One can never have too much type," says John. One regret he does have is not learning type casting. On this subject he just sighs and says that he'll just have to support the few remaining type foundries.

John's press collection ranges from a Meihle Pony that weighs some 8,000

pounds to a little "rail" or "school desk" press that you can hold in one hand. Ranking high in John's collection are the Standbrook Abbey Columbian, an Army Press, a Lowe press and probably the rarest—an Adams Cottage Press.

His working presses include three Vandercook Universal Ones, one with a power cylinder, a Universal III with a power cylinder, a 10x15 and 8x12 C&P, a couple of Sigwalt table top platens and a Hohner table top. Several other smaller presses are useable so that if a person wanted to use



The 20,000 sq. ft. facility!



Have you ever wondered what will happen when we letterpress printers shuffle off this mortal coil? Perhaps some of us will make it "up" to that big print shop in the heavens! Playing this game and going one-step further, have you ever wondered just what that shop

might look like?

I have, and I know exactly what it will look like: John Horn's print shop! Back in 1999 I had the privilege of seeing his shop and beautiful home and yes, I was in heaven!

The shop can be found within a 20,000 sq. ft. metal building behind his house, located on the outskirts of Little Rock, Ark. Most of the building is not heated or cooled



There are six rows of type cabinets in John's shop with a few other cabinets scattered around.



Model 31 Linotype used at the press.



Borders, borders and more borders—shown here are the hundreds and hundreds of boxes containing borders at the Shooting Star Press.



Some of the "set-up boxes" used to store rare or unusual fonts of type.

a Pearl, a Pilot, or New Champion, they could. He claims he isn't looking for more presses, but doesn't make the same statement about buying more type.

When did this collecting obsession hit John? He claims it was an accident. John started with a 10x15 and a cabinet of Sty-mie and Brush in a rented storage building around 1975. Then a few more cabinets showed up and then a few more presses. (Is this sounding familiar?) "Small offset



Robyn and John Horn

printers were getting rid of their letterpress equipment," John said. They were calling John to haul it off. He said he got the reputation of buying whole shops and then would bring it all home, sort it out, keep the good stuff and dump the rest. John claims two people "aided and abetted" him in this collection mania and they are Dave Churchman and Steve Saxe.

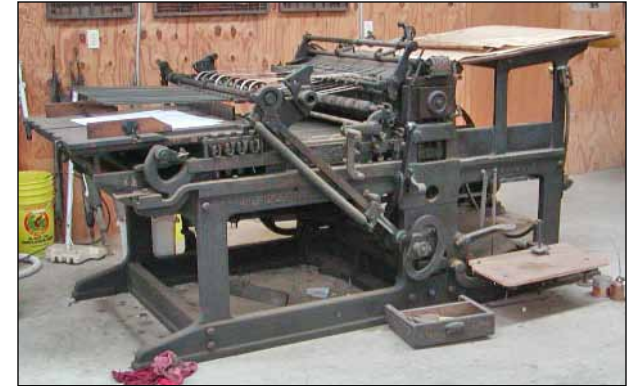
In the beginning, his shop was modest and in a storage facility. After he married Robyn, the shop was moved to her garage. From the garage the next move was to an old house behind their first home and after that they built a 2,700 sq. ft. building on the same property. In 1990 John hosted an APA Wayzgoose at that site but in addition to the building, John had two other warehouses at another site. Actually, John said his press collection took a huge leap, as it was at the 1990 Wayzgoose he was introduced to Penny Speckter and he made an offer to purchase the Speckter collection of small presses.

In 1991, John and Robyn's current home was purchased and the 20,000 sq. ft. shop was constructed in 1993. "This was double the size of all our other shops and warehouses," John said and he figured, "I'd never fill it up." He also said a tractor shed was built a few years ago and now it is about half full of printing equipment.



robyn horn

Robyn Horn's abilities go far, far beyond encouraging John and helping him. She is an accomplished painter and sculptor with her work being displayed at many museums and galleries around the country. If this wasn't a journal dealing with letterpress printing, we could easily devote considerable space to a story on Robyn and her many talents and her successful journey in the world of art. You must take a look at her [web site](#), and see her work and many accomplishments.



Lower left: The Hoe press.

Top left: Some of the many smaller presses in John's collection.

Top right: Meihle Pony press.

Bottom right: Albion Press.



John's wife Robyn has been casually mentioned here a few times but John said that he can't say enough about her words of encouragement in his pursuit of his hobby. Not only encouragement, but also she has driven trucks, loaded and unloaded hundreds of trailer loads and helped him figure out how to move heavy items. Not only that, John said she has helped him move most of his printing equipment and type at least twice.

This obsession with letterpress for John goes back to his junior high school days. He said he found an old press and some type in the corner of his school's wood working shop. When he expressed an interest in learning about it, he was told it wasn't used anymore.



Makeup area.



The 10x15 and 8x12 C&P presses with the Sigwalts further down the line.

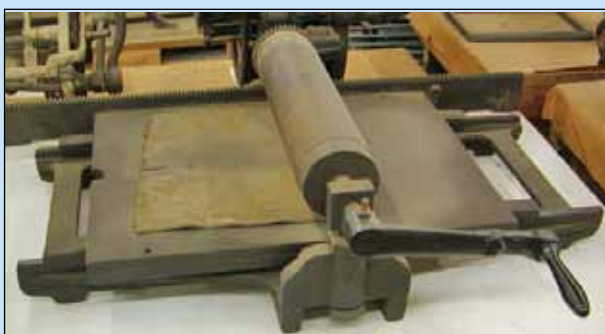


The of the Vandercook presses used at the Shooting Star Press.



Standbrook Abby Columbian press.

Presses that John ranks high in his collection



The Army press.



The Lowe press.



The Adams Cottage Pres.

When he entered high school in 1962 John found out he could take a one-hour class in printing and jumped at the opportunity. During his junior year in high school he took four hours of printing and four hours of regular class. When his senior year rolled around he took four hours of regular class and then had a job the last half of the day. "By the end of the year, I was working part-time in two or three other shops in town," John stated.

In the fall of 1965 he entered Arkansas State University to pursue a degree in printing. While at the university, he was also working part-time during the summers in various job shops. John said he did not graduate and was drafted into the Army.

His stint in the Army did not stop him from printing. John mentions how he was trained in artillery but upon arrival in Vietnam the Army discovered he was a printer and on one of the Army's few occasions

they actually put him to work in something he was fully trained for and enjoyed. He spent eight weeks in the field and the rest of the year ran a print shop 60 miles from the Demilitarized Zone.

Upon being discharged from the Army, he returned to Little Rock and began working at various small job shops around town and part-time in other towns around the state. John surmised that he must have worked at a hundred different shops around

the state. That came to an end when he “retired” from commercial printing in 1985 and his hobby shop, the Shooting Star Press received much more attention.

As one might imagine in a shop the size that John has, the work produced there presents quite a variety in letterpress printing. John confides that he loves to print posters and using big wood type (jokingly adds that it probably the case because he can read it without his glasses).

His printing spans a wide variety of work and he says he enjoys it all and gets turned on seeing piles of freshly printed-paper sitting in a drying rack!

He will tell you that the calendar he does on an annual basis is probably his biggest, most complicated job and requires considerable effort. However he adds that when the calendar pages are spread out ready to be collated, “it looks really great!”

I had to play the role of *National Enquirer* and find out how this creative duo of Robyn and John met and eventually married.

John remembers Robyn’s roommate set them up. He said that he thought he was going to have dinner with two women but at the last minute, her roommate informed them that she had a date and left Robyn and John alone. The roommate must have

known these two had to get together. John 8 said that about a year and a half later they married in 1979.

“Robyn and I have always been ‘makers,’” John says and continues, “we’ve always had in interest in making things and in creating.”

While remodeling their kitchen, both of them decided that they wanted to learn how to do stain glass so they could make some inserts for their cabinet doors. Both learned the craft and did a lot of stained glass and even worked craft shows for a while.

He confides that they even tried hot glass—but without much success.

John’s brother introduced Robyn to



Presses and other letterpress items that are taking up space in John’s warehouse and his recently built tractor facility.

woodturning and she ventured out on her own artistic journey into sculpture and also back into painting. John stayed with printing although has been very active in supporting Robyn's efforts.

John doesn't roam around alone in that large shop all the time! Since 1987 he has had apprentices in his shop. He says many of them have drifted away from letterpress printing after finding the process slow, tedious, and difficult or they may just have lost interest. He confides that perhaps some might have gotten tired of dealing with

him. He says in the early days he was pretty lax in his approach to teaching as he'd just give them a copy of Ralph Polk's book, "The Practice of Printing" and turn them loose in the shop with him watching and correcting them.

That method of teaching has changed. He tells how he now starts any apprentices with a four-day, very structured class. Teaching starts with the measurement system and all the correct terms used in letterpress. "I'm very obsessed with teaching the 'right way' to do letterpress printing—the



John and his apprentices.



John's 2011 calendars ready for collating.

traditional way," John states.

His students learn to operate a Vandercook and then a tabletop platen press and if he feels they are competent enough, he'll move them to operating a powered C&P.

After this instruction period, students or apprentices are invited to work in his shop on their own projects for one night a week until they feel they want to set up their own shop. He currently has 10 apprentices and won't take any more until someone moves on.

Instructor John thinks he has found the right teaching mode due to the fact that his current apprentices have "stuck with it."

John says, "I think they all are aware that they have been given a rare opportunity to work in such a well-equipped shop." An understatement to be sure.

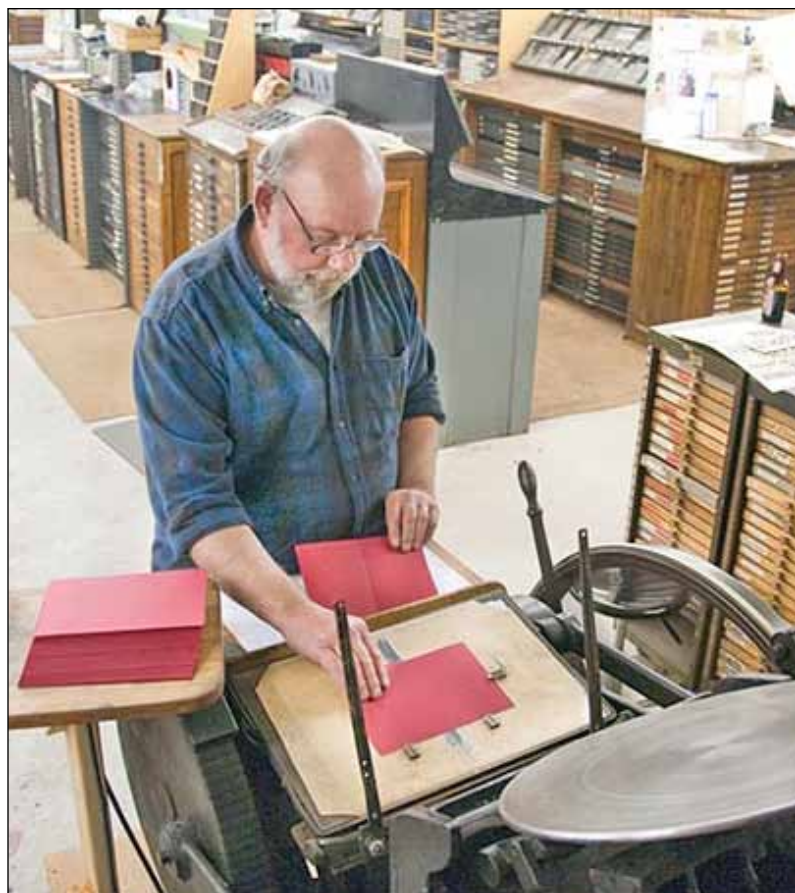
To expand even more on the "giving back" aspect of Robyn and John's success in their respective crafts, both have become very involved in Penland School of Crafts in Penland, North Carolina.

For those who don't know, Penland is one of the top schools in the world for teaching

crafts. They have comprehensive programs in fiber arts, clay, glass, woodworking, iron and metal, printmaking and now letterpress printing.

Several years ago John had the opportunity to be an unofficial assistant to Steve Miller who is the director of the book arts program at the University of Alabama while he taught a two-week course in letterpress at Penland. It was then that John realized that he had something to contribute and that something was his 50 years experience in printing! He also realized that if he really cared about preserving the craft, he should make an effort to pass on his knowledge and experience to others who are interested.

I asked John what happens to all of this wonderland of letterpress equipment and type when he finally shuffles off this mortal coil? His reply: "I would really like to see my collection dispersed before I die and hope I have the time to do so like Paul Duensing and the Worley's did very generously. I doubt there is anyone else out there who would want, let alone have the capacity to haul and store all this stuff."



John at working at the press.

MichiGander 'Goose

June 23–26, 2011

There will be maps available for interested spouses featuring quilting, crocheting and scrapbooking. Lansing also has many museums and shopping venues.

The Goose will also feature the first annual Guy Botterill Memorial Type Contest.

Registration packets in the March bundle.

Click the Lansing map below to go to the website!



JUST YOUR TYPE ON

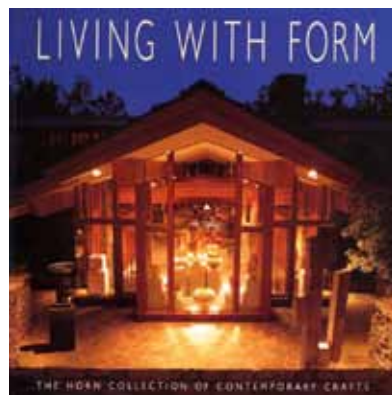
You Tube

Click on the graphics!





Catamount, bronze and oil paint, 1992. John Battenberg



The 214 page book showing the Horn collection.

THE HORN COLLECTION

John and Robyn are not only artists in their own right, but are also serious collectors of art. They built their current home with the expressed idea of designing it so that the home would show their collection effectively and in the best light.

In 1999 the Arkansas Arts Center in association with Bradley Publishing, published a 214-page book titled "Living With Form—The Horn Collection of Contemporary Crafts." It gives a glimpse of their home but an excellent view of the collected art along with information on the respective artists. You can Google the book and purchase it from a variety of outlets.

A couple of excerpts from the book:

"For me, one of the most important aspects of collecting is the opportunity to meet and get to know the artists. Being an artist myself, I think I have an accurate view from the artists' perspective. It is not an easy career to choose. Many sacrifices must often be made, not just by



A hallway in the Horn home.



Twisted Tall Boy, huon pine, 1993. Stuart Montague.



Dining table, bubinga, macassar ebony, ebony, 1997. Anthony Beverly.

the artists, but also by their families. Most live in areas where they have low overhead costs, enabling them to continue working, as it is not usually a prosperous venture. We have met some of our closest friends through the work they have produced, and they have added new dimensions to our lives, enriching us with their work as well as their friendships. I believe that most artists would be collectors if they could afford to do so. Most of them have a deep passion for the work that keeps them going, even when other careers would be much more profitable."

—Robyn Horn

"Living daily with the objects in this collection has made me realize the importance of form in our lives. When a person lives with an art object, sees it frequently, observes it in changing light conditions, in different settings, he gains a much deeper appreciation of its beauty, grace, rhythms, patterns, and textures.

"Obviously, Robyn is the major motivating force in our collection. Without her intense study of contemporary craft and sculpture, her self-training, her desire to know and understand the artists, this collection would not have been assembled."

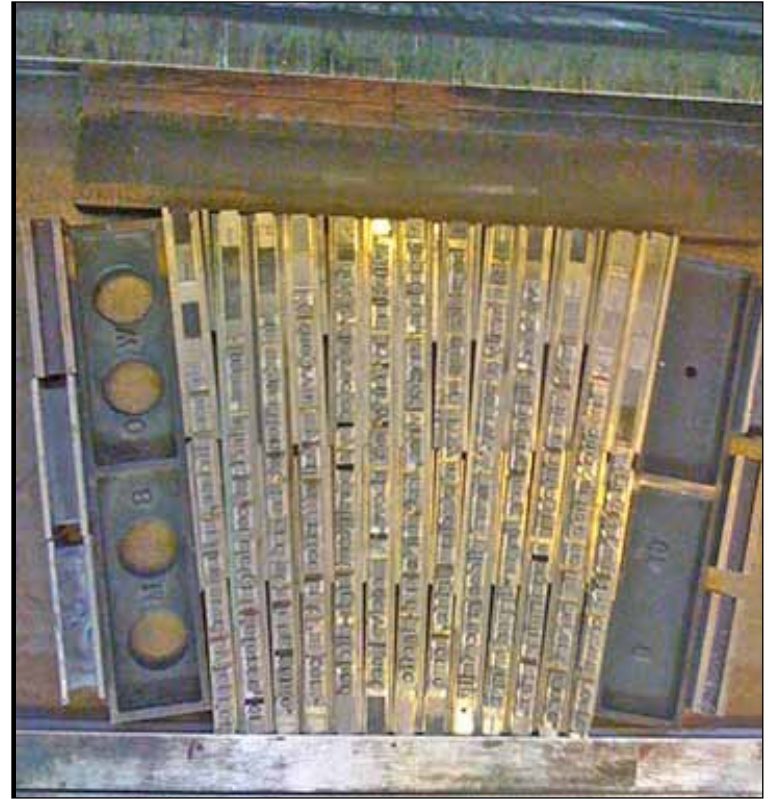
—John Horn

Photographs in this section taken by Matt Bradley from the book, "Living With Form."

Creating shapes to enhance type

In a recent project that incorporated handset type, I experimented with several ways to create shapes that would enhance the text. These prints are in small editions--less than 15--and worked with the assistance of gravity and magnets in the bed of my Vandercook Universal 1. A passage that was intended to look like rays of light started with setting the type with leads, as usual, then adding shorter slugs at the ends to splay out the lines. For type that I wanted to set in a circle, I used electrical tape as a core to align the sorts, then "belted" it with a metal band that plumbers use to join PVC pipes. The electrical tape is soft enough (and lower than type high) to really hold the type in place. These bands come in a variety of sizes and tighten with a screwdriver. I've also had good results curving around wood or foam core that is cut into shapes. I set the type against a one point lead lined with doublestick tape, and it curves quite easily.

by JESSICA SPRING



Thanks to Jessica Spring, #738, for submitting this article and photos.

Members are invited to send in information and photos of a special project they have completed. We'd like to see more of what our members are doing—especially maybe something a little out of the ordinary.

Email the editor!

It's time to plan for this year's MichiGander 'Goose!

For the last few years I've ended up with more winter projects in the letterpress shop than we had winter weather! In Iowa we plan around the distinct seasons that we have. So I will hopefully have time this spring and summer to accomplish those tasks that I ran out of winter for.

That's a reminder how time flies, and that we will soon be gathering in Lansing, Michigan for this year's MichiGander 'Goose. Information and registration materials are online, and listed in this issue and the January issue. Sign up now while you're thinking about it. The time is fast approaching. (Check the next page for details.)

Your Board of Directors will soon be making a decision on the location for the 2012 Wayzgoose, so send in your recommendations or suggestions for consideration. We want to get the location decided upon soon so it can be announced at the close of this year's event in Lansing. Contact me **by email** soon at if you have questions and/or interest.

Our new mailers and secretary-treasurer



are off to a great start — and they have just slipped right in to their tasks, and the APA didn't so much as skip a beat!

So, with everything chugging along A-OK, I can get back in the shop and work on some more of those winter projects. I have been cleaning recently acquired Intertype magazines and mats, and racks to put them all in, and filing away the sorts for those fonts.

I am also starting to work on cleaning and refurbishing two more presses — a 1916 vintage Chandler & Price new series 12x18 and a 1950 vintage 10x15 Heidelberg that needs to get moved in. I enjoy everything about letterpress printing, including renovating equipment and even cleaning ink rollers.

In addition to enjoying everything pertaining to letterpress, I get a kick out of sharing the craft with students and newcomers, as well as the seasoned veterans who can have such wonderful stories about the old days to share.

One such seasoned vet is visiting this weekend — Patrick Leary (#630) — is using the shop to print some new stationery.

He picked a good weekend to visit, as I have a group of about a dozen or so Iowa State University Print students and instructors coming Saturday for a tour and hands-on activities with presses and linecasters. Patrick will be helping me with the “Dog-and-Pony-Show” we will present to the group.

Seeing the new interest and enthusiasm in “newbies” is great, and it helps perpetuate the craft, and maybe someday soon they will become members of a great letterpress printing group— the Amalgamated Printers' Association! So . . . print, promote, and help perpetuate the craft. It's fun!

New APA Mailers are off and running

What were the surprises when the Wrzeninski's took over the APA Mailer's job? "The position has been as we anticipated," stated Sara Wrzeninski. She said they were given a great deal of advice from previous mailers and are happy they have a large mailbox and a protected porch to hold all the packages.

Some suggestions to members: don't use peanuts to pack packages. Wrap packages well, but don't overdue and it as it can be difficult to open. Also, they caution members to use all the same weight of stock when printing as differing envelope weights can lead to disaster.

It takes them about two evenings to design and print envelopes and another evening to collate. Affixing labels, postage, etc. takes another three hours and then to the post office.

Ky is a Database Administrator and Sara does graphic design and some letterpress jobbing. She currently works for a geography company.

Both joined APA in 2000 and Sara said their first Goose was in Gurnee in 2001 and that cemented their affection for the APA!



Sara and Ky Wrzeninski took over mailing duties in January and at this early stage seem to have it all down pat! Thanks for taking on a key job in APA! They do want to remind you that your name **MUST** appear on all pieces submitted for the bundle and they need 155 pieces for the mailing. Maximum sheet size is 6"x9" single sheet and 5½x8½" folded.